

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of November 23, 2015
3pm, Altgeld 315

Present: Coller, Falkoff, Goldenberg, Hunt, Isabel, Li, Mogren, Molnar, O'Brien, Parker, Reynolds and Subramony

Guests: Dr. Catherine Raymond, Director, Center for Burma Studies

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m

Program Review for Center for Burma Studies:

**Jerry Blazey, Interim Vice President of Research and Innovation Partnerships, and
Catherine Raymond, Director, Center for Burma Studies**

Announcements:

Brianno Coller received the Mechanics Division Best Paper Award from the 2016 American Society for Engineering Education held in Seattle. His paper was entitled, "A Glimpse into How Students Solve Concept Problems in Rigid Body Dynamics."

Marc Falkoff added approval of the minutes from November 2, 2016 to the agenda.

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes and the motion passed unanimously.

Coller: We are talking about the Center for Burma Studies today. Nicely written and concise review of the Center which is a unique entity here at NIU. Not only because of the language and culture, but it is a pretty spectacular place. Academically there are 31 courses that have more than 25% content on Burma.

Center for Burma Studies has a broad set of resources and activities ranging from the Burma Art Collections to bibliographic holdings, a peer-reviewed journal which they brought copies of for us. They have a yearly conference and every other year it is here at NIU. I listed a few things. Can you elaborate on a few of these things? There are various Centers across the country how come your Center has all these elements?

Raymond: There are probably other countries that have other resources but none on Southeast Asian art and none on Burma. I also want to mention something that isn't in the 5 year report but is in the Program Prioritization narrative; we are trying to look at other Centers or units interested in Burma. Two have been created lately. One in China and one Thailand. They are connected to us because they came here to see what we are doing. They are connected with special issues on the borders of China and Thailand in particular. Another is located in Australia but mainly interested in political science and contemporary issues and doesn't provide curatorial archives as well as new interests. We are unique in the sense that we have been receiving donations for nearly 30 years. The materials we usually offer to any scholar in the field and any community at large. This is unique in combining my position with a research position and that I am teaching.

Coller: So to be clear you have a half-time position in the School of Art and Design.

Raymond: I am 51% with School of Art and 49% Director of the Center for Burma Studies (CBS). I have a 10 month position. When I came to NIU they proposed 12 months but I negotiated for 10 months so I can do research. If you read the Declaration of Trust (DOT) it's one of half time in the summer for Center affairs. I am spending part of my summer in Burma anyway. Either for bringing students from here and there or collaborating with Universities we have signed MOU's with lately in 2014 and 15 and working on research projects.

Coller: Great. Let's move towards the students. The Center for Burma studies is not a degree program so my understanding is you don't have students. But your report indicates you are very much involved with fostering and developing scholars in the study of Burma. Can you elaborate on the role and what types of support you provide in student development?

Raymond: I don't calculate the number of letters of recommendations I write each year, either for our students or scholars here or abroad. Regularly I have written a letter of recommendation for these scholars studying on Burma. They can be Russian, German, Australian, etc. They are international and they usually come to our International conference and I know them. Plus they may be in our peer-reviewed journal so I also know their work. Because I am going to this international conference either Euro SOAS or the AAS which is the Association for Asian Studies (AAS). So for NIU it's always bringing them on the map. Related to the students they come to my office regularly to discuss various ways to do research and people to contact.

Coller: I recall from your report that your center is responsible for getting many fellowships for graduate students. Two dozen right?

Raymond: We got the Boren and the FLAS Title VI. At the university level we had students applying for internal scholarships as well. I wrote a German scholarship for students. Usually they ask me where to write and how to do this.

Coller: We are also unique because we teach Burmese language.

Raymond: This is the only place since 1990 that has a tenure track position for teaching Burmese. The last data I have, we got 44% of American students studying Burma come to NIU because of the language. The professor of Burmese we had was Dr. Saw Tun, who was my professor when I was studying. I was glad to see he was here when I came to NIU. He has since retired. A new professor is now in his place, Tharaphi Than. The two other places they teach Burmese is Cornell this is only 10 hours a week and the person doing that is now is France. She was also teaching French. She is Burmese and recently they are looking for someone to replace her because she's now in France.academia. They couldn't get a tenure track position. Also Berkeley is launching a beginner program. And the third is Maryland. I discussed with our sister Center CSEAS Director, Judy Ledgerwood, that this is a place where their also teaching Burmese since the opening of Burma in 2012 when Obama visited Burma. They use our Burmese language online classes that we established long ago at NIU and the State Department is using this a lot for training and the US Embassy in Rangoon.

APC: Also you report you have 900 students directly impacted by courses. Can you elaborate?

Raymond: Yes I am asked a lot to be part of team-taught classes and intervene on survey classes at different levels with SEAS or as an Art Historian or Director of CBS to give a talk on Burma at different levels. I printed all the courses which are taught and they are on the website for the Center.

Coller: I think I recall in our discussion you mentioned you bring in artifacts from the collection to your classes.

Raymond: Oh yes, according to the DOT our collection when possible has to be part of the instruction. Therefore, students in my classes have access to our art collection. I am also part of the Life Long Learning and I bring artifacts to them as well. I usually bring in the curatorial manner with my gloves. But it's also support for undergraduate and honor students to be able to see an art objects of 8th century for examples or they can conceive the way ethics can also be part of art. Meaning what can you do when people are stealing objects? This can be part of their education on protecting the cultural patrimony to respect when they travel abroad.

Coller: Can you tell us about BIG NIU

Raymond: The Burma Interest Group was created when I arrived here. In 2004 it was registered as a non-political entity. Informing the students and developing interest in Burma Studies. For that reason, they have been involved in a lot of activities and they respond to other student associations from other university or other institutions. For example, we went several times to Rockford to learn about the Burmese refugees, why they came here. For the last five years especially since 2012 they went to DuPage, Ann Arbor, and Northwestern to answer students requests when they want to go to Burma, what do we, and how can we contact politicians. How can you explain the situations? They are also involved when we have visitors. They are the first to receive them and I usually have a party at my house to introduce and discuss various Burmese issues. I'll share with you one of the last projects and why a computer was part of it. This was a possible online curriculum devised on visualizing SEA culture and we started to collaborate with two Burmese universities on reverse glass paintings. This should be active in December. I have been asked to share a symposium with my colleagues in France in June, but also to prepare an exhibition in Burma at the National Museum with two other universities. This morning I received an email from two students in political science needing help to decipher one of our objects inscriptions. This has been accepted for publications. So all kinds of students are interested to show the complexity of the region. Study Abroad has been a part of it. I usually take one or two students with me and I help them to get a scholarship since it's not so expensive. They have been quite successful in getting their MAs and to continue with their PhDs. One student is working toward a PhD at UCLA, one at the Getty Foundation, one at the field museum. Two others are in a local museum.

Molnar: Do you ever plan to change the name of the Center? Since the name of the country has changed.

Raymond: I proposed that when arrived. In 1989 it was changed so for me I am a French citizen.it is "Birmanie" but in Burma it is Myanmar. But there is a ban still so until it is lifted Burma is called Burma/Myanmar. But officially at Burma Studies Foundation we won't change until the State Department. does. But I will probably continue to call the country Burma/Myanmar. Although people are using Myanmar more and more.

Li: Because I am a Chinese faculty they never change the name we still write the same character even though they keep on changing it. Because the English name is different?

Raymond: I know but the problem in Europe is because of the historical background of each country, each country has a way of naming things which change in English. Sometimes I don't even know the equivalents. But Myanmar as I explained before Myanmar (si language) Myanmar mu mu people, Myanmar pi is the country. It has always been Myanmar so it's not a problem for the people. For the Burmese you have the same character; it doesn't change.

Li: In the future I don't know how many people will know the word Burma. The generation now may have never heard of Burma.

Raymond: Yes, so we will associate when the time comes you will erase one name for another name. Part of the history 1885-1948 the country was a colony of UK and so that was the name.

Molnar: Follow-up to this in terms of name change. Obviously there was a trust established between the only Burma Studies center in the US here at NIU. What would the trust have to do with changing the name? Would we have difficulties even if we wanted to change it having to do with that trust?

Raymond: In 2013, we addressed this at AAS. When the time comes, we'll address it. I would have been pleased to have Burma/Myanmar Studies. But Myanmar Studies is very strange. Even when you go to Vietnam for a long time it was called Ho Chi Min city not Saigon.

APC: Yes but our generations, such as for my daughter, she has never heard of Burma. She's a freshman in college. Maybe in the future when you market your program you should consider this.

Raymond: Yes I understand.

Molnar: But even in SEA, if I talk to Indonesians they refer to it as Burma. In Bangkok they still say Burma. Even neighbor countries have not made the switch.

Coller: What is the relationship between your Center and Center for Southeast Asia Studies? Describe?

Raymond: The Center Burma Studies came because of our affiliation with the Center for SEAS plus various aspect of the geopolitics of the US. I think there is a question why not put the two together. In my program review I think I can explain Summary of Research on page 31 which says clearly that the mission statement for locating a stand-alone CBS on the NIU campus was to complement the instructional and research interest of CSEAS, which was already well established. Above all, the BSF recognized that the ongoing curatorial responsibility for taking position of an extensive Burma art collection and Burma archive was essentially incompatible with soft money contingent of the CSEAS (Center for Southeast Asia Studies) which is dependent upon soft money, grants and so on. Recurring costs for folding the CBS into the CSEAS appeared oblivious of the binding legal contract between NIU and CBS which advocated, would result of the Burma art collection being removed from the campus. In a few words we are not on soft money that is why NIU was selected instead of Michigan, Madison, and Cornell.

Coller: So you have to keep them separate as entities but there still is a lot of collaboration?

Raymond: All the time. We share the same building, resources, outreach, projects, writing grants, etc. Anything I do will go under CSEAS because Myanmar Studies are part of SEAS. I am very happy to share what I'm doing. We work together all the time. In fact, we are the only Title VI undergraduate resource center at NIU. The CSEAS give us a lot of opportunity but, because we are the only CBS among the NRC center and we are talking 7 in the US, that gets this funding we have a better chance to get funding.

Coller: Do you have your artifacts on display at all times? Where are they?

Raymond: Yes, 4th floor of the library. This is part of the DOT. We should always have new donations displayed. This is what you can see in the library. We are just finishing up the various interpretive materials. Small displays on 1st floor at the School of Arts. We also have a strong collaboration with the Art Museum. Our last exhibit, in fall, 2014, was "Dressing Difference: Exploring Gender and Identities." This exhibition went to Denison University in Granville, OH. We just got back last week. We'll have an exhibition in the Art Museum for the next International Burma Studies Conference at NIU in fall, 2016. Recently ten items were selected by the Asia Society in New York. We had a conservator paid by them come here and chose 10 items to be in their exhibition which were exhibited spring, 2015 and viewed by more than 10,000 visitors. People came here and asked how we have this in our collection. Even the Burmese curator who came here in fall, 2014 paid by the Asia Foundation in San Francisco, was also surprised by our collection. But that is because we have donations by Americans who worked in Burma. They get older and downsize and look for places to donate their collections. We are the only university teaching and promoting Burmese knowledge based on our materials, either archival or maps. I just received three maps last week from the 18th century from one of our scholars. We don't buy anything, and don't want a budget for this. It is my strong feeling that protection of cultural patronage.

Coller: In our discussion a few weeks ago we talked about storage. I don't know how much you want to get into this right now. I got the impression there are some things you want to talk about. They seem to be stored in odd places.

Raymond: Just to give you a two minute background, when the CBS was welcomed to NIU in 1986 it came with a core collection of 87 objects from one of the BSF founders. It was stored in the former library in Swen Parson. In 1990, the NIU Art Museum's collection and our collection was increasing by bequest and went to Altgeld auditorium. When, in 1997, they wanted to restore this building we had to move somewhere else. Since I arrived here, the situation of storage has been temporary and we have been exploring seriously what can satisfy the request of the DOT which states we must have a minimum of 725 square feet. So, in fact, what we have been exploring is 1500-2000 square feet for the new location. I am currently writing a grant right now for compact storage system.

Isabel: Where is the collection currently being stored?

Raymond: Swen Parson basement mainly but in different places in Swen Parson.

Isabel: Do you have to worry about atmosphere?

Raymond: Yes, everything. The good aspect when dealing with books is you know it's already a HVAC or humidity controlled place and also fire safety is usually respected in Founders Memorial Library. But that doesn't mean it's ideal. In Swen Parson I've been working on the humidity control for the last 2 years. When I have huge exhibitions that means I open the doors a lot, this affects the whole collection. Like a winery in France it's not the same degree of humidity. I'm happy I finally see myself visualizing a better space. I would like to get back to a place where the collection can be on permanent view. We have been getting proposals to receive more collection donations, especially one related to contemporary art work, and I will be delighted to welcome that. The fact that our Center can be studied and explored on contemporary issues by our students from different fields through the art.

Blazey: NIU Press in Monsanto is moving from storing books to digital. Now all that storage space will be open. Catherine is doing homework to see how much it will cost to move to this storage. It will take the collection to the next level.

Raymond: Last Monday I was at the facility that specializes in compact storage. This helps in order for me to visualize how to organize the space.

Douglass: If you were using space in Monsanto, will there be opportunity to display your collection?

Blazey: No we haven't explored that. It's in an outer building.

Douglass: I see. I didn't know it was an outer building.

Isabel: The space would be just for storage.

Raymond: When I get requests to see the objects, I bring the object. I have to plan when there's no display in the Art Gallery to bring the object there. Here are some flyers from the Asia Society and you can see these objects are quite large so you need space to observe them.

Blazey: This is the only outside group that thinks increasing the space makes sense. If you do decide this is the next step of recommendation, it's very powerful.

Coller: That's our recommendation that the archival and biblio be put online but this material assets you have are very unique. I say here that there's materials scholars have to come to NIU to see and study it and it makes this campus a destination for scholarship. We urge you to continue what you are already doing. Continue to get better storage space, curatorial space, and exhibit space in order to maintain and showcase the collection. Important for scholarship but also for your teaching of students. Better facilities enhance the vitality of the Center and can be used to leverage donations. This is what we put down there.

Douglass: Jerry, is CBS one of the two that you finished for Program Prioritization?

Blazey: No we just need a five minute discussion to finalize.

Douglass: You do have a recommendation from the APC that would certainly be worth putting into the Program Prioritization narrative.

Blazey: That would be fantastic. I can certainly put that in. Great!

Coller: Anything else.

Parker: Your report touches on this can you elaborate. What is unique about Burma from a political, cultural standpoint?

Raymond: In five minutes... Strategically Burma is located between China and India. That's one point. A lot of decision makers in the US are looking at this corridor as an important way of preventing what is happening in Europe. Potentially a rich country in resources which has been kept under the military for 60 years. In terms of dimension it an important country in SEAS. Rich in history. Interesting time period to study. I've been studying SEA for over 30 years. The previous people in charge exploring various initiative of what's happening in Burma. You can look at the Journal for Burma Studies and you will read about the contemporary, historical, art, and chemistry issues. A lot is addressed through these journals.

APC: Recently I had a meeting with Chris McCord who sees Burma/Myanmar as having a lot of opportunity, including biology, geology, and geography. Since the country has opened up, there is a lot of new science and could have significant strategic value for us on the NIU campus.

Raymond: When Professor Molnar discovered two years ago that the most recent Biology book they were using was from the 1950s, we started inquiring around campus. So far we have collected books from Pat Vary in Biology and she's offering her library to Burma. This is wonderful since they don't have a resources. We have nearly a dozen undergraduate and graduate students coming from Burma to study here at NIU. As part of Title VI, CSEAS have been collaborating with the State Department programs welcoming young leaders from SEA to NIU. When going back to their county, a part of them have been applying to NIU for their college education. They feel this is a place they can be safe and we have a good community of Southeast Asian students.

Douglass: Thank you for coming today and shedding some insight on your report and for providing a beautifully written report.

Raymond: Thank you.

Douglass: Next we will send you a letter basically saying there's a few things we would like you to comment on further. I don't anticipate there will be a lot. We will send that in March. We will use the information in your report as well as what Brianno presented as part of the follow up that we do with the IL Board of Higher Education and Board of Trustees.

Blazey: Thank you. You took a look at the document and had some good suggestions and will find a way into our narrative. Appreciate that.

Raymond: Thank you all for your various input and influences I do appreciate it.

APC: Our last agenda item is other business. Anyone have any other business. No. Ok we've reached the end of the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Bjorneby